

Ātreya Ṛṣi: A woman's statement?

Prabhupāda: If a woman is perfect in Kṛṣṇa consciousness... **Just like Jāhnavā-devī, Lord Nityānanda's wife, she was ācārya. She was ācārya.** She was controlling the whole Vaiṣṇava community.

Ātreya Ṛṣi: Lord Nityānanda?

Prabhupāda: Wife. Jāhnavā-devī. She was controlling the whole Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community.

Ātreya Ṛṣi: **Do you have references about that in any of your books, Śrīla Prabhupāda?**

Prabhupāda: **I don't think.** But there are many ācāryas. Maybe somewhere I might have mentioned. **It is not that woman cannot be ācārya. Generally, they do not become. In a very special case.** But Jāhnavā-devī was accepted as but she did not declare.—
Room conversation – 29 June 1972, San Diego.

In this conversation with Ātreya Ṛṣi, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that, **“Jāhnavā-devī, Lord Nityānanda's wife,”** was an ācārya, which is consistent with his answer in the previously cited conversation with Prof. O'Connell. His statement in this conversation, **“It is not that woman cannot be ācārya. Generally, they do not become. In a very special case,”** is perfectly aligned with śāstra-vākya and is consistent with his answer, **“But not so many,”** to Prof. O'Connell.

These examples demonstrate that Śrīla Prabhupāda's answers – in his purports, his conversations, or his lectures – to the question of the authority of women to initiate, are perfectly harmonious with one another and with śāstra-vākyas.

Books are the basis

In this section, we will establish that among the ocean of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings, the instructions contained in his books, purports, and lectures are the primary basis for everyone. We will establish with evidence that Śrīla Prabhupāda himself

placed higher priority on his disciples and his followers to read from his books compared to reading from the transcripts of his audio recordings (lectures and room conversations) or his correspondences to individuals.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s main principle – *śāstra-yonitvāt*

The first principle is to follow the directions given by our Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport to Cc *Madhya* 20.352 – to understand and align *guru-vākyas* and *sādhu-vākyas* with *śāstra-vākyas*, and to understand *śāstra-vākyas* in light of our *paramparā-ācārya*’s commentaries or explanations. The second principle is to accept the hierarchy of *pramāṇas* (evidence), as per the instructions of His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of ISKCON. Books, Lectures, Morning Walks, Conversations, Letters - that’s the descending sequence of *pramāṇas*. Hence, we have to understand the mood and mission of Śrīla Prabhupāda based on this guideline of treating the instructions contained in his books as of first and foremost importance and that there is no need to interpret or interpolate the instructions contained in his books.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, in no ambiguous terms, instructed his disciples to study and follow whatever he stated in his books (he also often criticized his disciples for not reading them):

śāstra yonitvāt [*Brahma-sūtra* Vs. 1.1.3]. The *Vedānta* says, “You have to understand God through *śāstra*.” By the scriptures you have to understand. *Śāstra yonitvāt*. Everything is there. The *śāstra* gives you direction. Therefore human being is meant to study the *śāstras*. [Walk, May 1, 1973, Los Angeles]

From the above citation, we can understand that *śāstra* is the center of all. In the same manner, to understand Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings we have to thoroughly study his books and keep the instructions contained in his books as the center of all. This section presents several letters from the mid-1970s, as foundational examples of the *śāstra yonitvāt* principle and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statement, “Books are the basis.”⁵⁸

58 A Vedabase search for the term “read my books” yields about 150 plus results

Books are the basis of our Movement. Whatever appreciation we are getting on account of our books, it is because we are following the path chalked out by exalted devotees. We are not writing something whimsical. [Letter to: Tusta Kṛṣṇa—Bombay, 9 January 1976]

Śrīla Prabhupāda said: Whatever I have wanted to say, I have said in my books. If I live, I will say something more. If you want to know me, read my books. [TKG's Diary, June 9, 1977]

You may please me the most by reading my books and following the instructions therein and by becoming fully Krishna Conscious in this lifetime. Śrīla Prabhupāda, in a letter to Bahurupa – [Bombay 22 November 1974]

Revatīnandana: I have read your books, and I have heard your lecture. And so many things they are asking, I am..., have no capacity to answer them. But you must have the capacity because you know Kṛṣṇa. Therefore they want to ask you personally. ...

Prabhupāda: So whatever I know I have explained in my books. Beyond that, I have got no knowledge.

Devotee (2): If that is the case, Śrīla Prabhupāda that does not diminish our respect for you in the least because we have always held...

Prabhupāda: So what can I do? I say that whatever I have got experience, I am explaining in my books. I have explained. It is not possible for me to answer every individual person. It is not possible.

Devotee (2): We respect that. We understand. It is just that because they are saying these things...

Prabhupāda: I have got my advanced students. They can answer. If they are unable to answer, if you do not find the answer from my books, then it is hopeless. – [Room conversation, June 26, 1975, Los Angeles]

“... you must encourage the students to read our books throughout the day as much as possible, and give them all good advice how to understand the books, and inspire them to study the things from every point of view ... Now we have got so many students and so many temples but I am fearful that if we expand too much in this way that we shall become weakened and gradually the whole thing will become lost. Just like milk. We may thin it more and more with water for cheating the customer but in the end it will cease to be any longer milk. Better to boil the milk now very vigorously and make it thick and sweet. That is the best process. So let us concentrate on training our devotees very thoroughly in the knowledge of Krishna consciousness from our books, from tapes, by discussing always, and in so many ways instruct them in the right propositions.” – [Letter to Hamsaduta, Los Angeles, 22 June, 1972]

Continuing in that line Śrīla Prabhupāda, in another letter sent through his secretary, emphasizes reading books as being a higher priority than hearing or studying from transcriptions of his audio lectures.

My dear Prana Prabhu,

Please accept my humble obeisances. I have been instructed by His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda to reply your letter dated July 9th, 1977.

In discussing with His Divine Grace I summarized your desire to have access to all of the many tapes which Golden Avatar has for the purpose of transcribing them into rough manuscript form to be published later on as cross-references or in some other form. His Divine Grace was not very enthusiastic at all about this idea. **Śrīla Prabhupāda commented, “This is not necessary. My books are sufficient. Let all of my disciples read my books. This idea is an overburden. It will mean too many readings. Let them read whatever is there and digest it. Everything I have wanted to say I have said in my books. This will only be superfluous. Tell him to concentrate on reading my books,**

not on studying such transcriptions. Does he think he will find something else in these transcriptions that are not in my books?"... Formerly when I visited St. Louis temple with Tripurari Maharaja, we both noticed at that time that there was a tendency on many persons part, to study so many other "Prabhupāda's teachings." But now you have been fortunately blessed with the good direction from your own Spiritual Master to simply satisfy yourself in your thirst for transcendental knowledge by studying Śrīla Prabhupāda's existing books. Actually you should know that Prabhupāda's books are better than His speeches. This is because He concentrates tremendously and chooses each word when He writes these books. This is not my opinion but He Himself has said this to me. – [Letter from Tamal Krishna Gosvāmī, Vrndavana, July 20, 1977]

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Letters are not for mass circulation

Compared to his books, studying transcriptions of his lectures or his correspondences is lower in priority. In fact, on at least one occasion Śrīla Prabhupāda discouraged circulating his correspondences since those letters are meant to be personal and confidential.

".. I shall request you not to circulate all my letters that I address to you. Letters are sometimes personal and confidential, and if all letters are circulated, it may react reversely. I have already got some hints like that with letters I sent to you regarding Kirtanananda and Hayagriva. So in the future please do not circulate my letters to you. All my letters to you should be considered as confidential, and if you want at all to circulate, you just ask me before doing so." – Śrīla Prabhupāda's letter to Brāhmaṇanda, 28 September 1969

So, Śrīla Prabhupāda's books are the basis, and as per His Divine Grace's books, FDG is not an authorized *śāstric* injunction (SB 4.12.32 purport). This was recently well-argued by His Holiness Śivārāma Svami Mahārāja, a former GBC and guru who had actively participated in the FDG debates over the years.⁵⁹

As it should already be apparent, following the above

59 See video: <https://tinyurl.com/225twp2c>

instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda, we have presented our refutations to the book in question, by basing our viewpoints on, and in alignment with *śāstra-vākya* and following the principle of hierarchy of descending evidence while trying to explain our understanding of the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Let us again examine what Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned regarding women acting as *dikṣā-gurus* in his purport to SB 4.12.32. Therein Śrīla Prabhupāda states that scriptural injunctions forbid women from becoming a *dikṣā-guru*, whereas a woman can act as a *śikṣā-guru*:

“... According to *śāstric* injunctions, there is no difference between *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*, and generally the *śikṣā-guru*, later on, becomes the *dikṣā-guru*. Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s *dikṣā-guru*.” [SB 4.12.32 purport]

One might object that the purport doesn’t explicitly prohibit FDGs – it merely implies that. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda intended that the phrase, “according to *śāstric* injunction” governs the next sentence as well through the conjunction “however” as shown above; thus FDG is prohibited – a concept in harmony with the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, verse 1.42.

Karma-khaṇḍāḥ vs. Vedānta

Disputes over the relative importance of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s various statements closely resemble the historical ideological dispute between followers of *Karma-khaṇḍāḥ* and *Vedānta* on the relative importance of prescriptive statements versus descriptive statements. Prescriptive statements explicitly recommend some action— “A *brāhmaṇa* must tell the truth.” Descriptive statements do not make any such explicit recommendation— “A *brāhmaṇa* is truthful.” Similarly, in the ISKCON context some devotees say that what Śrīla Prabhupāda had his disciples do is more important than anything in his descriptions of Vedic culture or *śāstra*; if he did not explicitly engage his disciples according to whatever rules those descriptions might imply.

As to which of these two kinds of statements from *śāstra* have more authority—prescriptive versus descriptive—the followers of *karma-khaṇḍāḥ* teach that prescriptive statements are the only statements in scripture that are of value, whereas descriptive statements are of value only as supporting prescriptive statements. If there is a clash between the two, then the former wins. But the followers of *Vedānta*, which include all Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, refute this and give more importance to the descriptive statements found in *śāstra*.

Śrī Baladeva Vidyabhūṣaṇa in his *Govinda Bhāṣya* commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1.1.3, quoting the sage Jaimini (1.2.1 & 1.1.25), notes the *karma-khaṇḍāḥ* position, and responds with the analogy of a description of a hidden treasure in one's house and a description of its location. He argues that although it is descriptive, one nonetheless derives great benefit from it. Similarly, descriptions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and *Brahman* in the *Upaniṣads* are useful, as they motivate action and give guidance in attaining them. He gives a further example: “the description ‘this is not a snake but a rope only partly seen in the darkness’ is useful and a great relief from fear.” Thus, our *ācāryas* have rejected the idea that prescriptive statements of the scriptures are more important than descriptive statements.

Dubious principle of the author(s)'

In this section, it will be established that the author(s) place more emphasis on the prescriptive statements (letters and conversations) over descriptive statements (books and purports). This principle, although vividly seen throughout their book, is carefully hidden and well-orchestrated.

At the very beginning of their discussion on page 24, of their book, titled “What Evidence Should We Take as Conclusive?,” the author(s) set the stage for their argument with the famous verse *tarko 'pratiṣṭhaḥ...mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ* (*Mahābhārata Vana-pārva* 313.117) and cement it with a quote of

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī (Cc *Ādi-līlā*, 12.10) that those who disobey the order of spiritual master immediately become useless. They argue that ISKCON devotees should consider “spoken statements” of the great personality, Śrīla Prabhupāda as all-conclusive. Furthermore, they cite Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport to SB 7.7.26 – “*Ācāryavān puruṣo veda* [Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.14.2]: one can understand the truth fully when he has taken shelter of an expert *ācārya*.” – to substantiate their stand.

After setting the stage, in the section titled, “What Śrīla Prabhupāda Said?” on page 26 of their book, the author(s) cleverly present a series of conversations that seem like direct statements from the Founder-Ācārya in favor of the WDG or FDG resolution. The body of quotations on that page is predominantly from letters and private room conversations except for a *vyāsa-pūjā* lecture in which there was no explicit mention of *dikṣā-gurus*. Whereas, in that section of quotations, the purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.12.32 in which Śrīla Prabhupāda directly and explicitly mention *dikṣā-guru*, is conspicuous by its absence.

ardha-kukkuṭi-nyāya (half-hen logic) exposed

The absence of reference to the SB 4.12.32 purport on page 26 of their book, indicates that the author(s) do not consider that what Śrīla Prabhupāda said in his books and purports to fit the category of “What Śrīla Prabhupāda Said?” on the topic. Placing higher importance on the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda contained in his conversations and letters than on what he said in his books is a clear error with regards to the hierarchy of *pramāṇa*. It is strange that the author(s) use one set of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s letters and conversations that are favorable to their agenda and discard those letters and conversations of Śrīla Prabhupāda that instruct devotees that his books are the basis (effective usage of *ardha-kukkuṭi-nyāya* or half-hen logic). Thus, the author(s) establish their hidden agenda of telling the devotee community

to place more emphasis on the conversations and letters of the Founder-Ācārya above his books and *śāstra-vākya*s.

But as the old saying goes, “just as one cannot hide a full pumpkin in a plate of rice, a woman cannot hide her pregnancy.” Similarly, the evidence for this principle of the author(s) can be seen on pages 73-74 of the book in question, as cited below:

Śrīla Prabhupāda wasn’t intimidated by opposition. **His loyal followers**, if faced with objections on women dīkṣā-guru, **should tactfully but firmly explain the right understanding of the philosophy**; as Śrīla Prabhupāda did. – [p73-74]

From the above quote, we can infer that the author(s) imply that the those who adopt “prescriptive” principles are “**loyal followers**” of Śrīla Prabhupāda and they urge them to “**tactfully but firmly explain**” that only the “prescriptive statements” of Śrīla Prabhupāda as “**the right understanding of the philosophy**.” The author(s)’ conviction of their “principle” or *siddhānta*, with regards to *pramāṇa*, is obvious by their choice to cite sources predominantly from the letters that Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to his disciples even though the same message (of general philosophical subjects) is available in numerous places in his books and purports.

It is shocking to note that the author(s) have repeatedly selectively doctored quotes from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings, contained in his letters and purports alike, to achieve their pre-meditated goal.

To summarize this section, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s explanations of Kṛṣṇa consciousness based on *śāstra* contained in his books and lectures have more authority than his statements from his letters and conversations. Moreover, according to our *paramparā*, scripture is indispensable—*tasmāc chāstram pramāṇam te karyākarya-vyavasthitau* (BG 16.24). As per Śrīla Prabhupāda, “the *śāstra* is the center of all” (Cc *Madhya* 20.352 purport). Some devotees believe that Śrīla Prabhupāda was authorized to give us certain standards that were not

found in the *śāstra*. In the name of showing their affection and attachment to Śrīla Prabhupāda, such devotees commit the offense of considering Śrīla Prabhupāda as an ordinary person (*guror-avajāna*) and also the offense of thinking that he indulged in *niyamāgrahaḥ* – rejecting the rules and regulations of the *śāstras* and acting independently or whimsically.

“Śrīla Prabhupāda Wanted women dikṣā-gurus” – argument refuted

This section refutes the position taken by the author(s) under the titles: “Did Śrīla Prabhupāda Want women *dikṣā-gurus*?”, “What Śrīla Prabhupāda Said?” and “What Evidence Should We Take as Conclusive?” In the purport to SB 4.12.32, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that according to *śāstra*, Sunīti, being a woman, and specifically Dhruva Mahārāja’s mother, could not become his *dikṣā-guru*. This topic has been extensively discussed and elaborated already in earlier sections of our book. In a letter to a disciple, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote that he wanted his women disciples to have nice husbands and live as *gṛhasthas*.⁶⁰

Here, Śrīla Prabhupāda contrasts a “time, place, and circumstance” adjustment (*brahmacāriṇī āśrama*) with the standard from scripture, which is all women should be married. The scriptural reference he alludes to is *Manu-smṛiti* 9.3, which is a descriptive statement: *na strī svātantryam-arhati*, “a woman is never entitled to independence.” In this letter, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that he considers the *brahmacāriṇī āśrama* to be necessary because there was no proper social system in place (*varṇāśrama-dharma*) in the western countries at that time. In a *varṇāśrama-dharma* based society, all girls would practice *strī-dharma*, and would simultaneously assist their father, and later their husband, in executing their occupational duties based on the father’s and husband’s *varṇa*. Future generations of girls born in good devotee families would not need the *brahmacāriṇī āśrama*.

60 Letter to Satsvarūpa, August 8, 1968: See introductory section for full citation with text.

To reiterate, the author(s) in the sections – “What Śrīla Prabhupāda Said?” and “What Evidence Should We Take as Conclusive?” – conclusively state that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s prescriptive statements as the absolute truth without caring to align them with *śāstra*. For instance, while the author(s) quote – *tarko ‘pratiṣṭhaḥ...mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ* (*Mahābhārata Vana-pārva 313.117*) and Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī from *Cc Ādi-līlā, 12.10* – to remind us of the seriousness of disobeying the orders of a guru or *guror-avajāna*, they cleverly mislead the readers to think that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements from his personal correspondences to devotees and room conversations alone constitute to a greater degree “what he said” than what he wrote down in his books. This is *śāstra-viruddha*, a position that is in opposition to the Vedic standard or *siddhānta* based on *guru-vākyas* and *sādhu-vākyas* aligned with *śāstra-vākyas*. All *ācāryas*, including Śrīla Prabhupāda, consider *śāstra-viruddha* a great offense and hence the author(s) are traversing a dangerous path, and leading the rest of ISKCON further astray.

Despite this gross defect, in the preface section of their book the author(s), tactfully seek the cooperation from their “opponents,” “proponents,” and “innocent devotees” at the ground level alike while selectively and misleadingly quoting from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.28.31 in support of their *apa-siddhānta*.

On page 27 of their book, the author(s), like others of the pro-FDG camp, quote the following correspondence as one of their foundational pieces of evidence to prove that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted women *dikṣā-gurus*:

I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedanta will be allowed to initiate disciples. Maybe by 1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the numbers of the generations. That is my program. – Letter to Hamsaduta, 3 January 1969 – [p 27]

And their second direct piece of evidence comes from a conversation with Prof. O’Connell. Most importantly the author(s) and other pro-FDG supporters deny or explain away what is written in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (4.12.32 purport) as irrelevant. We have clearly shown in previous sections that Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed us to keep his instructions contained in his books (purports) as the basis, which the author(s) and other pro-FDG supports are guilty of violating. Hence, by not following the instructions of the Founder-Ācārya to not speculate or manufacture anything outside of Vedic culture and tradition, the author(s) force us to invoke the prayer, “*buddhas tu pāṣaṇḍa-gaṇa-pramādāt*,”⁶¹ for spiritual protection.

FDG in Gauḍīya tradition – SAC report refuted

SAC, a group of supposedly independent ISKCON scholars, is the official entity appointed by the GBC to research *śāstra* on various contentious topics. Over the last 20 years SAC has published two major papers on the validity of FDG (2005 and 2013). Recently, SAC published a manual of hermeneutic principles for devotees’ quick reference. In this section, we will briefly analyze the authenticity of SAC’s reports on FDG and also the claims made by the author(s), based on the authority of SAC, on the history and authenticity of WDG in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

Unauthenticity and Controversies surrounding SAC

Pertaining to this topic, starting on page 81 of their book, the author(s) cite the SAC paper, “Female *dikṣā-gurus* in ISKCON,” to demonstrate supposedly authoritative research into the lives and roles of five “Historical Examples of Female Gauḍīya *dikṣā-gurus*” in *Gauḍīya-vaiṣṇavism*. First and foremost, we have to understand that these personalities that have been listed and described in this paper are very rare, exceptional, and highly

61 Translation: “May Lord Buddhadeva protect me from activities opposed to Vedic principles and from laziness that causes one to madly forget the Vedic principles of knowledge and ritualistic action.”

empowered personalities, like Jāhnavā Ṭhākurāṇī, the eternal consort of Lord Nityānanda Prabhu and Gaṅgāmātā Gosvāminī, who could directly communicate with Lord Jagannātha. Hence, as already stated before, they all are the *pratyakṣitātmanāthānāms* (fully self-realized persons who can see the Lord face-to-face) as mentioned in the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* 1.44. Trying to institutionalize the system of female *dīkṣā-gurus*, a one of its kind invention, based on few examples who are rare exceptions and with no *śāstric* basis or Vedic cultural support is certainly a disaster waiting to happen. This is the reason, why Śrīla Prabhupāda rarely spoke or wrote about these personalities in his writings because they are such rare cases. With this in mind in the following passage from page 84 of the book under discussion, we find:

We are not aware of anyone contesting the historical validity or the spiritual status of the above five personalities: Sītā Ṭhākurāṇī, Jāhnavā Ṭhākurāṇī, Hemalātā Ṭhākurāṇī, Gaurāṅga-priyā Devī, and Gaṅgāmātā Gosvāminī. We have therefore identified them as primary examples of women *dīkṣā-gurus* in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. They are sufficient to demonstrate the existence and the acceptance of women initiating gurus in our sampradāya. In addition, there have been dozens of other ladies serving as *dīkṣā-gurus* in various Gauḍīya lineages. Because we don't possess that much information on each one of them, we refer to them as secondary examples. – [p 84]

In the above passage from their book, the statement, “We are not aware of anyone contesting ... five personalities:” indicates that the author(s) are apprehensive and not sure about their statement. However, we can find The Harmonist magazine presenting so many scholarly articles discussing proper spiritual conduct between male and female devotees with evidence from Vedic scriptures. Those interested to know more about this topic are recommended to visit the appendix section of this book and examine an article on Jhānava mātā and also the

footnote containing a link to Harmonist magazine articles on this subject.⁶²

Conflict of interest within SAC

To garner support from the devotee community, the author(s) cleverly cite the names of the SAC members who produced the aforementioned FDG research paper, and sure there are some big ISKCON scholars involved with this research paper. In footnote number 7, on page 81 of the book under discussion the author(s) list the devotees who assisted with the paper:

7 “Members participating in the authorship of this paper: H.H. Suhotra Svāmī, Gopiparāṇadhana Dāsa, Drutakarmā Dāsa, Mukunda Datta Dāsa, Pūrṇacandra Dāsa, Devāmṛta Dāsa.” Bold passages in the original. – [p 81]

One of the above-mentioned authors of the SAC paper (now an ex-member) has published a public testimonial⁶³ on the internet describing diplomacy, political power-plays, and heavy conflict of interest existing within SAC as reasons for him to disown his own research contribution to that paper. When contacted over the conflict of interest within SAC, a representative of the GBC-Bureau dialog team defended the integrity of the research project as shown below (our addition in parenthesis):

Urmila (mātā) did not produce the paper; she chaired a committee with very good scholars such as Madan Mohan (prabhu). And we take gold from a dirty place so let us judge the product and not attack her motives.

The opinion of the GBC-Bureau dialog representative that there was no conflict of interest on the part of Urmila mātā, seems to be naïve at the best. It is merely akin to stating that Śrīla Vyāsadeva did not compile the Vedic scriptures since the actual writing was done by Lord Gaṇapati. The introductory section of the SAC 2005 paper contradicts the GBC representative’s opinion; clearly the members of SAC and Urmila mātā herself were very much aware of the presence of conflict of interest

62 <https://tinyurl.com/yckvrs3w>

63 The SAC FDG paper controversy: <https://tinyurl.com/5z3utfty>

– Urmila mātā was an aspiring FDG candidate. Even though Urmila mātā, citing conflict of interest, withdrew from being a part of the writing of the research paper. Nonetheless, the public testimony of one of the SAC members, cited before, tells us that her primacy as the chair of the committee that discussed the paper’s direction and essential content was a hindrance to the overall objectivity. Moreover, the GBC dialog representative mentions the name of Madan Mohan Prabhu as one of the contributors of the SAC 2005/2013 papers. However, per the public testimonial of one of the authors of the SAC FDG papers, as cited before, also exposes the nasty political power-plays involving the then SAC chair and Madan Mohan Prabhu, the then co-author and SAC secretary; both deliberately ignored to include the minority opinion of the FDG research and as well as the concerns raised within the minority opinion about the conflict of interest associated with Urmila mātā.

How good were the SAC’s reports on FDG?

It is surprising that despite the official complaint lodged by the whistleblowers, the GBC’s executive committee (GBC-EC) ignored this nasty political powerplay within the SAC and the interference from the aspiring FDG candidates, heavily influencing the outcome of the SAC FDG papers.

The above cited testimonials reveal that Urmila mātā’s “secret involvement” throughout the discussions provided the paper’s most substantial direction and contents, and a first-hand experience of how SAC works. It seems even at that time it was suspected that she (and Narāyaṇī mātā) remained secretly involved in coordinating the writing of other members. Furthermore, why did the GBC-EC fail to ever address the stated concerns of the SAC team members? Is it because they were pressurized to not only implement the FDG agenda at any cost but also to thwart all efforts of objective research on anything that might contradict their pre-decided conclusion?

Hence, it is clear that both the then GBC-EC and SAC completely neglected Urmila mātā’s conflict of interest from

2005 through 2013, and to date. Thus, they chose to let her influence the outcome of the SAC's FDG paper. In light of such scandals prevailing within SAC, was it prudent for GBC to have continued to repose faith in the SAC to this day? What happened to their commitment to the devotees that they made at the beginning of this controversy in 2003, as cited below?

“Also, we want devotees, in general, to understand that the decision of the GBC was made in knowledge of Vaisnava history and siddhanta.”

Certainly, the inactions on the part of the GBC to check political powerplays within the SAC, especially in light of so many evidence provided above, is a serious concern leading to even doubt whether their promise to devotees of fair research was less than honest. Having witnessed degrading turmoil in ISKCON, out of great concern for Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement, one of his senior-most scholarly disciples and an ex-member of SAC lamented:

Atheism [in ISKCON] thrives only to the extent that we allow ourselves to be complicit in secrecy, lies, and suppression of any contrasting ideas.

Nonetheless, Urmilā mātā and Narāyaṇī mātā, active members of SAC, continue to the present day to present themselves as research scholars and conveners of scholarly panels contributing to the writing of several papers for the SAC that influences FDG discussion directly and indirectly. Evidence shows that several devotees, including a GBC had found their scholarship to contain bias, and severely lacking in thoroughness, accuracy, and knowledge of tradition. The footnote references present evidence to such critiques of their work.⁶⁴

What can be stated about the scholarship of the author(s) of the book in discussion, who, on pages 120–123 of their book,

⁶⁴ Scriptural based refutations to Urmilā mātā's claims that a woman can do fire sacrifice on her own by directly offering oblations to the fire. – <https://tinyurl.com/5n8x4bw3>, <https://tinyurl.com/4xptw5k2>

ignore such serious discrepancies and argue that SAC's 2003 paper on female *dīkṣā-gurus* is not only fine but also a balanced, reasonable, and fair treatment of the subject?

As far as the quality of SAC's reports is concerned, the numerous controversies (including and not limited to a conflict of interest of aspiring FDG candidates) convince us that the SAC's philosophical conclusions do not fairly represent the views of ISKCON devotees.⁶⁵

What about *dīkṣā-gurus* of Gauḍīya tradition?

In this section, we will refute the claims on page 86 of the book in question titled "Secondary Examples of women *dīkṣā-gurus* in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism," that the author(s) claim to be bona fide examples of many female *dīkṣā-gurus* in the *guru-paramparā* of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. On page 86, the author(s) try to address the concerns of their opponents concerning the veracity and authenticity of the various female "*dīkṣā-gurus*," mentioned in this section of the book:

In the attempt to discredit all the above lady *dīkṣā-gurus* (and to undermine and delegitimize the idea of women *dīkṣā-gurus* in ISKCON), a devotee recommended dismissing all these lineages as bogus. The theory is that these are all hereditary, seminal disciplic successions in which, as one devotee put it, "out of necessity to continue the line of *dīkṣā* where there was no male offspring, the daughter became the *dīkṣā-guru* to carry on the family line." What to make of this idea? The first observation is that it's simply an assumption with no basis in research or historical facts; it's only a hypothesis created by the longing to see a world free from women *dīkṣā-gurus*. Secondly, such a sweeping conjecture is being promoted without even knowing the names of all these ladies *dīkṣā-gurus*; what to speak of the details of their family situations. The third consideration is that the idea that all these ladies were simply appointed because

65 See also, the relevant sections about SAC controversy in the introductory sections of this writing.

of the absence of male descendents doesn't hold well under scrutiny. – [p 86]

First of all, it is not clear, whether the author(s) have verified all the historical details of all these female personalities that they list as *dikṣā-gurus*. If they did then where are their findings and why have they not presented any references for their sources? Moreover, the author(s) seem to rely too much on the 2005 FDG paper of SAC. At the time of writing their book (presumably sometime before the year of publishing in 2013), the author(s) could have searched the internet to find the alleged discrepancies in the SAC FDG papers and the open criticism that some of the members of SAC have voiced in regards to unethical and anti-Vedic standards of research. This would have helped them to some extent in pacifying their opponents.

Moreover, in one of our prior refutations, under the title “The Sarasvatī debacle,” we established the deficiency of in-depth research on the part of the author(s). So, in light of such lapses, what guarantees can the author(s) issue in order to vouch for their credibility of knowledge of Vedic tradition and culture. For example, in one of his purports from *Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta* (CC), *Ādi* 12.18, towards the end of the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda states:

One may refer to the Vaiṣṇava-mañjuṣā for the complete genealogical table of Advaita Prabhu in the line of Kṛṣṇa Mīśra.

On pages 86 through 88 of their book, the author(s) attempt to discuss the line of Kṛṣṇa Mīśra but they do not indicate their information source nor do they follow the instruction of Śrīla Prabhupāda to refer to *Vaiṣṇava-mañjuṣā*. There is not a single reference to *Vaiṣṇava-mañjuṣā* in their book, yet they attempt to study the lineage of the sons of Advaita Prabhu. Another instance of risk of *guror-avajña* by the author(s). So how can devotees trust the information that the author(s) provide on such sensitive topics?

On page 95 of the book in contention, the author(s) attempt to make a strong case to support the authenticity of caste-goswāmīs, and raise the question: on what basis devotees opposed to WDG, state that Bipina Bihārī goswāmī's line is not an authorized line of *guru-paramparā*? The following is a snippet from their book on page 95:

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura didn't include Vipina-vihārī in the paramparā (the list of spiritual masters published at the beginning of the Bhagavad-gītā As It Is); and someone could say that it shows that Vipina-vihārī was bogus. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura did indeed choose to include Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī ("Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda referred to him as Vaiṣṇavasarbhauma, the Commander-in-chief of the Vaiṣṇavas . . . He was a perfectly self-realized soul, and he was the beloved leader of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas.") But why should the inclusion of Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī make Vipina-vihārī bogus? Haridāsa Ṭhākura, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Goswāmī, Śrīnivāsa Ācārya and Śyāmānanda Paṇḍita – to name a few – were also not included in the paramparā; does this make them bogus? – [page 95-96]

First of all, the author(s) pose an "invalid argument" regarding non-inclusion of Bipina Bihārī goswāmī in the list of spiritual masters published at the beginning of Bhagavad-gītā As It Is. The reason that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura chose Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī line instead of Bipina Bihārī goswāmī's line is due to philosophical disagreements. The reason why Sarasvatī Ṭhākura did not include every single *ācārya* in the line of Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī (such as Haridāsa Ṭhākura, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Goswāmī, Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, and Śyāmānanda Paṇḍita) is certainly not due to philosophical differences of opinion. Hence the author(s)' attempt to equate the two is an invalid argument. Hence by making an invalid statement and defeating the invalid statement, they make a mockery of their own scholarly credentials.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Akin to Causal Fallacy: "Every time a rooster crows, the sun comes up. Crows must be the creators of the universe."

We have already covered major issues associated with caste-gosvāmīs in previous sections. Therein, with regards to this sub-topic, we showed an instance of the author(s) going against the words of our *ācāryas* especially that of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in regards to caste gosvāmīs. The author(s) repeat such infractions many times in their book and yet again on page 88 of their book, they cite a portion of purport to Cc *Ādi* 12.27 as shown below:

The Sanskrit book Advaita-carita states that Balarāma, Svarūpa and Jagadīśa were the fourth, fifth and sixth sons of Advaita Ācārya. Therefore, Śrī Advaita Ācārya had six sons. Balarāma, Svarūpa, and Jagadīśa, being smārtas, or Māyāvādīs, were rejected by Vaiṣṇava society.
– [portion of para 1 of purport to Cc *Ādi* 12.27 on p 88]

Within the same purport to Cc *Ādi* 12.27, which was partially quoted by the author(s) on page 88 of their book, Śrīla Prabhupāda cites his guru-mahārāja's statements which caution us against following of caste Gosvāmīs, as shown below, which the author(s) failed to notice:

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura did not recognize the caste gosvāmīs because they were not in the line of the six gosvāmīs in the renounced order who were direct disciples of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu — namely Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrīla Bhaṭṭa Raghunātha Gosvāmī, Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura said that the gr̥hastha āśrama, or the status of family life, is a sort of concession for sense gratification. Therefore a gr̥hastha should not falsely adopt the title gosvāmī. The ISKCON movement has never conferred the title gosvāmī upon a householder. [Cc *Ādi* 12.27 purport, paragraph 2]

What could be the reason for the author(s), while quoting the first paragraph of a purport to explain the historical details regarding *Advaita-parivārs*, to disregard the all-important instructions of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura

contained in the second paragraph of that purport in regards to the caste Gosvāmīs as being irrelevant? Isn't it surprising that the author(s) took the trouble to explain about half-hen logic in one of the earlier sections of their book only to explicitly and grossly adopt the same logic in this scenario? A clear example of tu quoque fallacy or an appeal to hypocrisy.

Following Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's instructions, we should not recognize caste gosvāmīs as our precedence or role models because we are known as followers of Lord Caitanya and His teachings, as passed down through the gosvāmīs headed by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī (hence we are called Rūpanugās). Even for the sake of argument if we were to implement the FDG resolution, the candidate for female guru has to be a householder since women can never be independent. Now, in the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda and ISKCON, this has never happened; so, what title we would offer these FDGs? Are we to use the precedence from the caste gosvāmīs and award householder female gurus the title equivalent to gosvāmīs? These are more reasons why FDG has no traditional and scriptural backing.

Pro-FDG varṇāśrama argument – debunked

In one of the initial sections of this book, through our “grain of rice” tests, we exposed the author(s)' pretense of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. The old saying, “there is no smoke without fire,” cautions us to be aware of undelying dangers and not be deceived by surface level promises. Similarly, the devotee community should exercise necessary (pre)cautions to avoid deceptions based on the author(s)' “*varṇāśrama* argument,” presented on pages 56-71 of their book. One important point is that the topic of *varṇāśrama* is so much involved with the practical aspect of Vedic culture that refuting the “*varṇāśrama* argument” presented in those pages of their book will in itself constitute a booklet. In short, the author(s) and the pro-FDG camp seem paranoid of *varṇāśrama* and are reluctant to

understand and implement it simply because they are ignorant of the fact that *varṇāśrama* is meant to aid Kṛṣṇa consciousness. On the other hand, the group that is opposed to FDG implementation is comprised of many devotees such as HH Bhakti Rāghava Swami and HH Bhakti Vikāsa Swami who are pioneering projects of *daivi-varṇāśrama* based farm communities and contribute immensely to the ministry of *daivi-varṇāśrama* of ISKCON. So, the real refutations to the arguments presented in this book by the author(s) will be in demonstration of the implementation of *daivi-varṇāśrama* based farm communities and congregations. Nonetheless, we will only address only some of the main points of contention raised by the author(s) under the section titled, “women *dikṣā-gurus* are Against Varṇāśrama,” on pages 56–69 of their book and we take this opportunity to inform our readers to look out for a dedicated publication on this most essential topic – defining the roadmap for the 10000 years of the golden age of *saṅkīrtana-yajña yuga-dharma*.

Is the varṇāśrama system needed for ISKCON?

In essence, the author(s) in their dozen pages of narrative (pages 56-69) lead the readers to the question should ISKCON choose to implement *varṇāśrama* or should they choose to implement women *dikṣā-gurus*? In these pages, they mainly conclude that it is important for society to implement a system in which devotees, especially women, when demonstrating an aptitude as a preacher and spiritual teacher, should not be suppressed, even if the scriptures prohibit such social roles for women. Now let us consider the author(s)’ argument from a passage on page 64 of the book in contention:

The “varṇāśrama argument” could also be presented in the following form: 1. ISKCON should implement varṇāśrama. 2. Women *dikṣā-gurus* sabotage varṇāśrama. 3. Therefore women cannot be *dikṣā-gurus*.

The first premise that ISKCON should implement varṇāśrama, needs definition and clarification (which type of varṇāśrama are we talking about? What elements should be included and which discarded as inapplicable?); therefore, the premise doesn't represent an absolute or clear-cut injunction. It is fair to say that Śrīla Prabhupāda did want to implement varṇāśrama but not to the extent that it would seriously hamper spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. **The second point (“Women dikṣā-gurus sabotage varṇāśrama”) is not based on śāstra;** it simply represents a subjective and speculative opinion. Furthermore, Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings indicate that women dikṣā-guru weren't against the form of varṇāśrama he envisioned. – [page 64]

One has to understand that the *varṇāśrama system* is a Vedic system of social science that is mandatory for us as long as we are situated on a material platform. There are certain aspects of the *varṇāśrama system* that may require adjustments for time, place, and circumstances just like every other system but none of those are inhibitors to implementing the *varṇāśrama system* within ISKCON. There is no doubt that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted ISKCON to implement the *varṇāśrama system* as shown by a couple of examples below:

There are two kinds of sva-dharmas, specific duties. As long as one is not liberated, one has to perform the duties of his particular body in accordance with religious principles to achieve liberation. When one is liberated, one's sva-dharma – specific duty – becomes spiritual and is not in the material bodily concept. In the bodily conception of life there are specific duties for the brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas respectively, and such duties are unavoidable. Sva-dharma is ordained by the Lord, and this will be clarified in the Fourth Chapter. On the bodily plane sva-dharma is called varṇāśrama-dharma, or man's steppingstone for spiritual understanding. Human civilization begins from the stage of varṇāśrama-dharma, or specific duties in terms of the specific modes of nature of the body obtained. Discharging one's specific duty in any field of action in accordance with the orders of higher

authorities serves to elevate one to a higher status of life. [BG. 2.31 purport]

To revive a fully cultured civilization, the scientific division of society into brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras must be introduced all over the world. Unless some people are trained as brāhmaṇas, there cannot be peace in human society. [Cc Ādi 17.42 purport]

Hence, no matter how many different ways we look at this topic, one thing that is clear is that as per guru, *sādhū*, and *śāstra* until one is liberated from the material platform, everyone (men and women included) must follow their dharma. This means that for male devotees it is *varṇāśrama-dharma* – follow the rules and regulations of the *varṇā* and *āśrama* that they are situated in. Women devotees should follow *strī-dharma*. The author(s) contention that “[the statement] ‘Women *dikṣā-gurus* sabotage *varṇāśrama*,’ is not per *śāstra*,” is not a true statement. We have already established that as per *śāstra*, the woman *dikṣā-guru* system cannot be institutionalized because women have their own *strī-dharma* to follow which prohibits them from being independent gurus at any stage of their life. The rest of this section will refute the author(s) views and narratives on this topic from guru, *sādhū*, and *śāstra vākyas* and that WDG not being sanctioned by *śāstra* is a critical factor that will sabotage the establishment of *daivi-varṇāśrama*.

As usual, on page 64 of the book under discussion, the author(s) make unreasonable claims that Śrīla Prabhupāda envisioned a *varṇāśrama* that allowed women *dikṣā-gurus*, which is not supported by evidence from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings nor from *śāstras*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda on female preachers – answered

Now we will proceed with refuting the author(s)’ statements sequentially beginning with page 56. Let us consider a portion of paragraph 2 on page 56 from the book in contention, wherein the author(s) state:

... In other words, Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly instructed women to be loyal spouses and responsible mothers (in line with standard canons of varṇāśrama), and **Śrīla Prabhupāda also recommended that they should become preachers and teachers of spiritual knowledge, up to the point of initiating disciples.** [page 56 para 2]

The point of Śrīla Prabhupāda wanting women in ISKCON to initiate is the point of contention. Śrīla Prabhupāda himself obviously never instituted FDG nor is there any evidence that he planned to do it and so we cannot agree with the statement that he wanted it, unless it can be proved that he wanted it implemented or planned to do it. Regarding women preaching, yes Śrīla Prabhupāda once said even a young child can preach in their capacity and gave the example of young Sarasvati, the daughter of Mother Mālātī. However, women should only preach to women and not if it obstructs their duties to their families and husbands. This can be substantiated by the fact that Śrīla Prabhupāda strictly forbade the free mixing of men and women, as mentioned in his purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.12.9, “However advanced one may be in restraining the senses, it is almost impossible for a man to keep himself controlled in the presence of a woman, even if she is his daughter, mother or sister. Indeed, his mind is agitated even if one is in the renounced order of life. Therefore, Vedic civilization carefully restricts mingling between men and women. If one cannot understand the basic principle of restraining association between man and woman, he is to be considered an animal.” On pages 56 and 57 of their book, the author(s) try to establish that the argument about role of women in *varṇāśrama* is a false dilemma or artificially imposed as a mutually exclusive situation, as shown below:

In other words, Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly instructed women to be loyal spouses and responsible mothers (in line with standard canons of varṇāśrama), and Śrīla Prabhupāda also recommended that they should become preachers and teachers of spiritual

knowledge, up to the point of initiating disciples. There is no contradiction or disharmony between the two instructions. Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly wished to see devoted wives (“I am instructing our GBC’s that ‘Let our little girls be educated to become faithful and chaste.’” Lecture in San Francisco, 16 July 1975) and also eagerly wanted to see his disciples, both male and female, engaged in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness (“we want so many preachers, both men and women.” Letter to Jayagovinda, 8 February 1968). [56, 57]

This quote from the second paragraph on page 56 of their book (cited above) indicates that the author(s) are not clear in their understanding of the *varṇāśrama* system and are also deficient in their understanding of *śāstric* conclusions regarding the role of women in society and how this relates to the topic of FDG. In light of the scriptural evidence provided in previous sections of our book that proscribe women of less than *siddha* level from becoming *dikṣā-gurus*, the author(s)’ conviction that for women to preach and spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness they must initiate disciples confirms their *aśāstric* prejudice. The meaning of chastity is that women follow their husbands and be submissive to them and refrain from interacting with males outside of their family. Śrīla Prabhupāda, a strict follower of *śāstras*, repeatedly instructed his female disciples to maintain chastity because, by nature, the soul in a woman body is passionate, and only when the husband is nice and the woman follows, can she cultivate faith and chastity:

Woman, they are generally equipped with the qualities of passion and ignorance. And man also may be but man can be elevated to the platform of goodness. Woman cannot be. Woman cannot be. Therefore if the husband is nice and the woman follows—woman becomes faithful and chaste to the husband—then their both life becomes successful – [lecture SB 1.3.17, Sep. 22, 1972, Los Angeles]

In light of this arrangement of nature, how can a woman guide men? In the presence of fire, how can the butter in the pot not melt?

Such injunctions are not mutually exclusive; to present them as incongruent, or to accept one and reject the other, would be a disservice to both Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mission and to the principles of varṇāśrama. [Page 57]

We have shown how it is nonsensical to say that a woman could be an initiating guru and preach openly to men and women, and at the same time say that she can be called chaste. The two roles are mutually exclusive. If a woman has to be protected then she should be under a man’s guidance and serve him, thus taking a subdued social role, rather than sit on a *vyāsāsana* in front of many other men or discuss their personal lives, obstacles, and problems in intimate settings with men. To defy these Vedic practices would be a disservice to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mission and the principles of Vedic culture and *varṇāśrama*. On page 57 of their book, the author(s) pose an interesting question regarding *stri-dharma*:

On Thursday a woman is doing perfect *stri dharma* and has *śikṣā* disciples who she has trained for years in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Her husband is pleased with her preaching and she is a good wife and mother. On Friday they have a small ceremony in her home where she gives her disciples the mantra and their names and hears their vows. How, between Thursday and Friday, did her *stri dharma* get compromised? How did she become a feminist? What terrible thing happened at the ceremony that destroyed *varṇasrama* and ISKCON? – Email dated 3 December 2012, PAMHO text 24438948 [Page 57]

From the excerpt, shown above, we can clearly see the author(s)’ discrepancy in the understanding of *stri-dharma*. By stating that a woman can do her *stri-dharma* perfectly and at the same time also accept *śikṣā* disciples is quite contradictory to scriptural injunctions. The author(s)’ statement that a woman can perfectly execute her *stri-dharma* and as well as act an initiating spiritual master is preposterous at best. According to *stri-dharma* a woman has to be protected all the times and cannot act

independently or guide others by giving spiritual instructions. Hence, if a woman becomes a *dikṣā-guru* going against the scriptural injunctions given in the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharaadvāja-saṁhitā* (1.42-44) then she violates her *stri-dharma* and the norms of *varṇāśrama* and also embraces demoniac feminist conceptions

As long as we are in these material bodies, we should follow our dharma as given in Vedic scriptures. If we don't, it is sinful. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.36) Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa about what impells a person to commit sinful acts, even unwillingly as if engaged by force. Kṛṣṇa replied that it was due to *kāma* or lust alone and He also said that the greatest sin is for one to act for the satisfaction of their senses instead of acting for the sake of one's dharma. The *stri-dharma* or the dharma of a woman is given in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.11.25-29 and Śrīla Prabhupāda himself repeated these instructions so many times. If a woman performs activities contrary to her dharma she is acting sinfully. Śrīla Prabhupāda said in a purport to SB 4.12.32 that a woman cannot initiate and he said many times that women cannot act independently, so how can she start guiding other people independently? Besides that, as the saying goes; "a woman's work is never done," she has a lot of duties to see to in terms of the care of the children, home, grandchildren, cooking, etc. so no doubt if she starts other activities it will interfere with her home and family duties.

Varṇāśrama implementation – "Proof of the pudding is in the eating"

The author(s) are unable to understand the intricacies of the *varṇāśrama* system because they are cherry-picking quotes from Śrīla Prabhupāda instead of considering his teachings holistically. This is the major reason why, on the first paragraph of page 56, the author(s) seem to be blind-sighted regarding this topic:

This has been one of the most common – and one of the weakest – complaints. Why weak? The first reason is that no proof has

been presented to demonstrate that having women dīkṣā-guru is against the principles of varṇāśrama; the objection is more of an assumption than a real argument. [page 56, para 1]

While the author(s) may demand evidence supporting the argument that, “women dīkṣā-gurus are against varṇāśrama,” they are clouded with so many misconceptions about what the varṇāśrama system is all about. Even if they are presented with evidence are they in a position to decipher or examine the evidence? In any field of activity, only those who are knowledgeable and experienced in that field can understand the evidence supplied. As stated before, the real evidence for the success of varṇāśrama system is witnessed through the actual participation in creating and sustaining such varṇāśrama societies. All such varṇāśrama societies are built on the infrastructure of the vast knowledge given by our Founder-Ācārya, especially in his books and lectures, on the concept of simple living and high thinking. The author(s) have no experience in practicing the varṇāśrama system. Whereas the author(s) demand evidence that women dīkṣā-gurus will inhibit the principles of varṇāśrama, they have not provided any śāstric evidence to give support for women dīkṣā-gurus, not to speak of evidence supporting female dīkṣā-gurus in the varṇāśrama system. Hence, it is clear that by failing to provide any scriptural evidence to support their pro-FDG disposition, the author(s) are merely engaging in *vitaṇḍā* (merely finding faults with opposing views and not establishing one’s own points).

Women dīkṣā-gurus (WDG) vs varṇāśrama

In this section, we will explain how implementing WDG impacts the implementation of the varṇāśrama system and also address some of the misconceptions on the part of the author(s) in understanding the fundamentals regarding this issue. In the quoted passage in paragraph 2 from page 56 of the book in contention, the author(s) state that Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly wanted woman to preach while remaining chaste. Does this

mean that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted all of his female disciples to start preaching only after they become gurus or does it mean that he wanted all of his women disciples to become “exclusively *dikṣā-gurus*,” to preach? It is certainly true that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted everyone to acquire first-class *brāhminical* qualities. Certainly, in his ocean of teachings, Śrīla Prabhupāda has presented how men and women can acquire those qualities remaining in their prescribed social positions while realizing their spiritual status at the same time.

First and foremost, is to understand that women on their own are not identified by any particular *varṇa*, they only take on the *varṇa* of their protector (father or husband) and in Lord Kṛṣṇa’s Vedic culture, the term *varṇa* (*brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, and *śūdras*) refers to only males and women are classified as a separate category:

Therefore, according to the Vedic system, a boy born in a *brāhmaṇa* family, he is allowed all the *saṁskāras*, reformatory, purificatory process but the girl is not. Why? Now because a girl has to follow her husband. So if her husband is *brāhmaṇa*, automatically she becomes *brāhmaṇa*. There is no need of separate reformation. And by chance she may be married with a person who is not a *brāhmaṇa*, then what is the use of making her a *brāhmaṇa*? That is the general method. So therefore the..., even born in a *brāhmaṇa* family, a woman is taken as woman, not as *brāhmaṇa* – [Lecture, July 16, 1969, Los Angeles]

The twice-born men, namely the *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas*, are expected to undergo a cultural purificatory process known as *saṁskāras* but because of the bad influence of the present age the so-called members of the *brāhmaṇa* and other high-order families are no longer highly cultured. They are called the *dvija-bandhus*, or the friends and family members of the twice-born. But these *dvija-bandhus* are classified amongst the *śūdras* and the women. Śrīla Vyāsadeva divided the *Vedas* into various branches and subbranches for the sake of the less intelligent classes like the *dvija-bandhus*, *śūdras* and women. [SB 1.3.21 purport]

*vaivāhiko vidhiḥ strīṇāṃ saṃskāro vaidikaḥ smṛtaḥ
patisevā gurau vāso grhārtho'gniparikriyā*

”For females the rites of marriage have been ordained to be their ‘Vedic Sacrament’ (initiation), the serving of the husbands their ‘residence with the Teacher’ (Guru), and the household-duties their ‘tending of fire.’ (Spiritual activities)” [*Manu-saṃhitā* 2.67]

In one sense women do not get the sacred thread through any separate *upanayanam* ceremony. However, as already explained in one of the previous sections, they do get the sacred thread at the time of *vivāha-saṃskārāḥ* but that thread is worn on her behalf by her husband and not by her. Hence, she has to remain chaste to her husband and always remain under his protection.

Being completely dependent on their protectors (father, husband, or son) is the differentiating quality of the women’s class from the categories of men such as *dvijha*, *śūdra*, and lower classes of men. This is the system of *varṇāśrama* and one may ask how the position of women as a *dīkṣā-gurus* will affect the integrity of the *varṇāśrama* system? The point is that as per *strī-dharma* women cannot be independent and *gurus*, in particular *dīkṣā-gurus*, cannot be dependent on others as stated in the following purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.24.40):

A woman is not supposed to take *sannyāsa*. So-called spiritual societies concocted in modern times give *sannyāsa* even to women, although there is no sanction in the Vedic literature for a woman’s accepting *sannyāsa*. Otherwise, if it were sanctioned, Kardama Muni could have taken his wife and given her *sannyāsa*. **The woman must remain at home. She has only three stages of life: dependency on the father in childhood, dependency on the husband in youth and, in old age, dependency on the grown-up son, such as Kapila. In old age the progress of woman depends on the grown-up son.** The ideal son, Kapila Muni, is assuring His father of the deliverance of His mother so that His father may go peacefully without anxiety for his good wife. [SB 3.24.40 purport]

Being dependent on her protectors (father, husband, or son) for her deliverance from the clutches of material existence, how

will it be possible for a woman to accept the role of an initiating spiritual master and deliver her disciples? From the above-cited purport (SB 3.24.40), we see that women, due to acquiring their body with a particular gender (*liṅgam*), always take on the *varṇa* of their protectors irrespective of their birth,⁶⁷ whereas for *śūdras* and lower than *śūdra* classes of men – following *varṇāśrama-dharma* – their *varṇa* is determined by their qualities and not by birth. This is the reason why the *śāstras* allow men although born in *śūdra* and lower than *śūdra* families, and upon acquiring the qualities of *dvija* (especially a *brāhmaṇa*) they will be eligible to become *dikṣā-gurus*. Whereas ordinary women cannot become *dikṣā-gurus* unless they are pure devotee *mahābhāgavatas*. This is because even though she may cultivate the nature and qualities of a *brāhmaṇa*, she cannot circumvent her karma of her gender and the corresponding dharma she must follow (*strī-dharma*).

“The WDG false dilemma” fallacy – refuted

Continuing with the author(s)’ narrative of the *varṇāśrama* argument, let us consider a passage on page 56 of their book, as cited below:

Besides lacking proof, a crucial fallacy of the “varṇāśrama argument” is what is known in logic as “false dilemma;” a situation artificially presented as a “either this or that” while it may actually be a “this and that” (or a third option). In other words, Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly instructed women to be loyal spouses and responsible mothers (in line with standard canons of *varṇāśrama*), and Śrīla Prabhupāda also recommended that they should become preachers and teachers of spiritual knowledge, up to the point of initiating disciples. [page 56, para 1 contd.]

Having no practical experience and realizations from attempting to implement *daivi-varṇāśrama*, the author(s) branding “varṇāśrama” as a fallacy only exposes their lip service to

67 Not considering inter-varṇa interactions, such as: *a-sa-varṇa* or *anuloma* or *pratiloma jātis*.

following Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions. The author(s)’ claim that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted ISKCON women to initiate disciples as *dīkṣā-gurus* (in the name of preaching) and also remain chaste wives (in the name of following their *varṇāśrama-dharma*) lacks basis in scriptural injunctions and is a phantasmagoria (*ākāśa-puṣpa*). Their suggestion that women can initiate disciples and also remain chaste wives, according to *śāstras* is a “false dilemma” – portraying what is a mutually exclusive as mutually inclusive. The evidence for this conclusion is this: in his purport to Cc *Madhya* 8.128, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that the function of a *dīkṣā-guru* is to initiate according to the regulations of *śāstras*. Whereas, in 292 pages of their book the author(s) have not quoted any regulations from *śāstras* that allow women to act as *dīkṣā-gurus*?

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura also states that although one is situated as a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra*, *brahmacārī*, *vānaprastha*, *gṛhastha* or *sannyāsī*, if he is conversant in the science of Kṛṣṇa he can become a spiritual master as *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, *dīkṣā-guru* or *śikṣā-guru*. The spiritual master who first gives information about spiritual life is called the *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, the spiritual master who initiates according to the regulations of the *śāstras* is called the *dīkṣā-guru*, and the spiritual master who gives instructions for elevation is called the *śikṣā-guru*. [Cc *Madhya* 8.128 purport]

That there is no mention of women in the above purport and statement by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is beside the point. We have already established that women do not have a *varṇa* on their own. Moreover, we have already established that as per the regulations of *śāstra* ordinary women cannot become *dīkṣā-gurus*. So, in the *varṇāśrama-dharma* system, the position of a woman is either a daughter, wife or mother (grandmother or great-grandmothers etc.) and not as a guru-devī.

Women – natural grandmothers or guru-devīs?

Since guru-devī status would award independence to women, they could not participate in *varṇāśrama* dharma in any form. Moreover, the *sannyāsa āśrama* is not allowed for women because women must remain at home (SB 3.24.40 purport) and a *sannyāsī* should not stay at home. With this in context let us consider the following purport from Bg 16.1-3, as shown below:

In the *varṇāśrama* institution the *sannyāsī*, or the person in the renounced order of life, is considered to be the head or the spiritual master of all the social statuses and orders. A brāhmaṇa is considered to be the spiritual master of the three other sections of a society, namely, the kṣatriyas, the vaiśyas and the śūdras but a *sannyāsī*, who is on the top of the institution, is considered to be the spiritual master of the brāhmaṇas also. **For a *sannyāsī*, the first qualification should be fearlessness.** Because a *sannyāsī* has to be alone without any support or guarantee of support, he has simply to depend on the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If one thinks, “After I leave my connections, who will protect me?” he should not accept the renounced order of life. One must be fully convinced that Kṛṣṇa or the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His localized aspect as Paramātmā is always within that He is seeing everything, and He always knows what one intends to do. One must thus have firm conviction that Kṛṣṇa as Paramātmā will take care of a soul surrendered to Him. “I shall never be alone,” one should think. “Even if I live in the darkest regions of a forest I shall be accompanied by Kṛṣṇa, and He will give me all protection.” **That conviction is called abhayam, fearlessness. This state of mind is necessary for a person in the renounced order of life.** [BG 16.1-3 purport]

In the above purport, it is stated that a *sannyāsī*’s primary role in society is to act as a spiritual master of all social classes, and the first qualification to act in that role is fearlessness. In the same purport Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that fearlessness means one should not be worried about one’s protection; that one should be convinced that one is never alone and that Kṛṣṇa will give one all protection. So, why can’t an ordinary woman, convinced of Kṛṣṇa’s protection and who exhibits the quality of

fearlessness, become a spiritual master on her own? As stated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport SB 3.23.51, a woman is never independent and gets the quality of fearlessness only through her protector and not on her own (especially her husband and later on by the grown-up son), as cited below:

Devahūti requested her husband to grant her something without fear. As a wife, she was a fully surrendered soul to her husband, and it is the responsibility of the husband to give his wife fearlessness. How one awards fearlessness to his subordinate is mentioned in the Fifth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. One who cannot get free from the clutches of death is dependent, and he should not become a spiritual master, nor a husband, a kinsman, a father, a mother, etc. It is the duty of the superior to give fearlessness to the subordinate. To take charge of someone, therefore, either as a father, mother, spiritual master, relative, or husband, one must accept the responsibility to give his ward freedom from the fearful situation of material existence. Material existence is always fearful and full of anxiety. Devahūti is saying, “You have given me all sorts of material comforts by your yogic power, and since you are now prepared to go away, you must give me your last award so that I may get free from this material, conditional life.”

In chapter 24 of canto 3 (SB 3.24.2, 3.24.4), Kardama Muni says that by begetting a son she will become free of anxiety and be liberated from material conditional life. The above purport also answers the often-raised question as to how a man in the *gr̥hasthaḥ-āśrama* can initiate whereas a woman in the *gr̥hasthaḥ-āśrama* cannot initiate. The brief answer to this is that a man in *gr̥hasthaḥ-āśrama*, being the head of the household, should depend only on Lord Kṛṣṇa for his protection. A woman however, is always to be protected and sheltered by a protector (specifically by a devotee father, husband, or son), and therefore she cannot take the responsibility of offering protection and shelter to anyone on her own.

Dikṣā-gurus – givers or receivers of protection?

Nonetheless, citing the fact that a *brahmaṇa* needs protection from *kṣatriyas* just as every male is protected by his seniors and guru, one may ask how a man doesn't need protection except from Kṛṣṇa? The author(s) make a similar case on pages 71 and 72 of their book, as cited below:

Furthermore, let's consider that in Vedic culture protection is not meant only for women; brāhmaṇas and old men should be protected too. As Śrīla Prabhupāda said in a lecture: *According to Vedic politics, the children and brāhmaṇa, old men and woman . . . They require protection. . . . Just like old man like us, I am always taken care of. Similarly, a brāhmaṇa also should be taken care of, first consideration. First protection, brāhmaṇa, saintly person. – Lecture on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.8.51, Los Angeles, 13 May 1973*

If we were to accept the principle that those who “require protection” should not be *dikṣā-gurus*, then all brāhmaṇas and old men should also not be *dikṣā-gurus*. [pages 71 and 72]

In response to this argument, we will prove that the author(s) have got their argument backwards because they seem to misunderstand or are not aware about the eligibility to become a guru. One can become a guru to only those who are under his protection. A wife is under the protection of her husband so he is her guru. Children are under the protection of their mother, so the mother is their guru. All *varṇas* and *āśramas* are under the protection of the *sannyāsīs*, so they are the gurus of the *varṇas* and *āśramas*. All *varṇas* are under the protection of *brahmaṇa*, so *brāhmaṇa* is the guru of all *varṇas*.

Protection that is provided by *kṣatriyas* to his citizens including the *brāhmaṇas* is a different kind of protection -- that of physical protection. While the protection provided by the guru or *brahmaṇas* is the protection against *adharma*. Thus, the two types of protection are different and therefore cannot be compared. Even when the *kṣatriyas* protect the *brahmaṇas*, the

kṣatriyas are not considered the gurus of the *brahmaṇas*. But when the *brahmaṇas* protect the *kṣatriyas* against *adharmā*, the *brahmaṇas* act as their gurus.

Women always need to be protected against *adharmā*, as stated in Bg 1.40 (cited and explained in the previous section under the title of protection for women). Thus, they cannot be gurus. They can be gurus to their children but not *dīkṣā-gurus* because later their sons will have to provide her with protection, both physical protection and protection from *adharmā*.

“Women at old age can become *dīkṣā-guru*” – refuted

On page 59, the author(s) suggest a novel concept: a woman can be alone without any protection when she is free from the care of dependents after her children are grown up and have moved on as cited below:

Isn't it reasonable that women who had been dutifully engaged in their domestic duties would assume other duties once the children have grown and moved on with their life? There is no contradiction between focusing on being a caring parent in youth, and, later in life, assuming responsibility for the spiritual growth of spiritual children. [page 59]

So, it is very clear from the above passage that the author(s) are influenced by the modern demonic concept of the nuclear family and not families that follow *varṇāśrama* dharma. In the Vedic society of *varṇāśrama* dharma women are never left alone to live independently as claimed by the author(s). Such a concept of children (especially the sons) leaving their parents, especially the mother, to fend for themselves, being orphaned in old age, is considered “*adharmā*.”

In old age the progress of woman depends on the grown-up son. The ideal son, Kapila Muni, is assuring His father of the deliverance of His mother so that His father may go peacefully without anxiety for his good wife. [SB 3.24.40 purport]

The author(s) are contradicting the codes of dharma by stating that a woman can be a parent in her youth and when the husband divorces her and the children move out of her house, she may live alone and then take on the responsibility of a spiritual master. None of this is possible in *varṇāśrama-dharma* based societies for householders.

Another important point is that a household that lacks grandmothers, cannot remain as a stable household and in fact the generations following such unstable households have demonstrated that they are mostly in mentally unstable situations. ISKCON badly needs good grandmothers much more than *guru-devīs*. In any sane culture (even non-Vedic) grandmothers have a very important role and are given the unique position and honor of being a grandmother.⁶⁸

“magic ellipses” - time and circumstances

On page 61 of their book, the author(s) yet again use “magic ellipses” to their advantage to suggest that Śrīla Prabhupāda made adjustments of dharma (against the rules and regulations of *varṇāśrama-dharma*) according to time, place, and circumstances, as cited below (emphasis are ours):

Another inaccurate assumption in regard to **varṇāśrama** is that its **regulations are something fixed for all times and circumstances** and that the ācārya can’t adjust varṇāśrama norms to the specifics of time, places and individuals involved. **Śrīla Prabhupāda gives the example of himself as an ācārya adapting varṇāśrama principles to missionary activities:** *Every ācārya has a specific means of propagating his spiritual movement with the aim of bringing men to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, the method of one ācārya may be different from that of another but the ultimate goal is never neglected. . . . The ācārya must devise a means to bring them to devotional service. Therefore, although I am a sannyāsī I sometimes take part in getting boys and girls married, although in the history of sannyāsa*

68 Please visit <https://bvks.com/gurudevis-and-grandmothers/> for more information on this topic.

no sannyāsī has personally taken part in marrying his disciples
 – Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā, 7.37, purport – [p 61]

As usual, the author(s) use their standard trick to mask out an important statement, “First they should become Kṛṣṇa conscious, and all the prescribed rules and regulations **may later gradually be introduced.**” So yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave some concessions in the initial days but it was seldom his idea to institutionalize these concessions as permanent policies. Should we institutionalize Śrīla Prabhupāda’s adjustment of traditional *sannyāsa-dharma* and make it official ISKCON policy that all initiating spiritual masters take part in marrying their disciples? Did we not note the fact that the majority of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings during the latter part of the 1970s were more focussed on emphasizing the rules and regulations and insisting on the implementation of *varṇāśrama dharma* within ISKCON? Śrīla Prabhupāda made some adjustments to certain practices according to time, place, and circumstance, but to state that he made adjustments to dharma (*varṇāśrama dharma*) is not supported by his statements in his purports and contradicts his teachings as cited below:

Real religious principles are enacted by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Although fully situated in the mode of goodness, even the great ṛṣis who occupy the topmost planets cannot ascertain the real religious principles, nor can the demigods or the leaders of Siddhaloka, to say nothing of the asuras, ordinary human beings, Vidyādhara and Cāraṇas. [SB 6.3.19 purport]

Religion is the law or code of the Lord. Consequently, religion cannot be manufactured even by great saintly persons, demigods or *siddha-mukhyas*, and what to speak of *asuras*, human beings, Vidyādhara, Cāraṇas, and so on. [Cc *Madhya* 11.99 purport]

Hence, how is it possible to accept the author(s)’ opinion that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted ISKCON women to initiate disciples as *dikṣā-gurus* and simultaneously follow their *strī-dharma* as a fact?

“Varṇāśrama is not a principle” – refuted

Let us consider another statement of the author(s) on page 59 of their book, as cited below, and compare that statement with the statement, “On the **bodily plane sva-dharma is called varṇāśrama-dharma** or man’s **steppingstone for spiritual understanding.**” from the purport to Bg 2.31:

The “varṇāśrama argument” is tainted with several inaccurate assumptions, one being that varṇāśrama conventions (not principles) are universal and supreme. [page 59]

In the purport to Bg 2.31, it is stated that *varṇāśrama-dharma* is the basic principle of human civilization because discharging one’s specific duty while following the orders of higher authorities is the only way to attain the higher status in life. There are numerous places in his teachings, wherein Śrīla Prabhupāda states just the opposite of what the author(s) say on page 59 that “**varṇāśrama conventions are not principles.**” Some of these statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda are cited below:

The *varṇāśrama* institution is constructed to enable one to realize the Absolute Truth. It is not for artificial domination of one division over another. When the aim of life, i.e., realization of the Absolute Truth, is missed by too much attachment for *indriya-prīti*, or sense gratification, as already discussed hereinbefore, the institution of the *varṇāśrama* is utilized by selfish men to pose an artificial predominance over the weaker section. In the Kali-yuga, or in the age of quarrel, this artificial predominance is already current but the saner section of the people know it well that the divisions of castes and orders of life are meant for smooth social intercourse and high-thinking self-realization and not for any other purpose. [SB 1.2.13 purport]

There should be a thorough overhauling of the social system, and society should revert to the Vedic principles that is, the four varṇas and the four āśramas. [SB 4.29.54 Purport]

The whole Vedic culture is dependent on varṇ āśrama. It is meant for everyone, not that it is meant for Indians only, no. [Bg. 18.45]

Lecture, Durban II October 1975]

Formerly there was no such piecework. One world, one king. One God, Kṛṣṇa. One scripture, Vedas. One civilization, varṇāśrama-dharma. [SB 2.4.2 Lecture, Los Angeles 26 June 1972]

Actually, we, the followers of Vedic principles, our system is varṇāśrama-dharma, four varṇas and four āśramas...Varṇāśrama-dharma is applicable in any, in anywhere. Cātur-varṇyaṁ mayā sṛṣṭaṁ guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ [Bg. 4.13]. The creation of God... Just like sun. Sun is creation of God. Sun is visible everywhere. Not that something [is] American sun and something Indian sun. No. The sun is the same. Similarly, cātur-varṇyaṁ, the four principles of division, brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, and śūdra, they are everywhere. It is not the monopoly of India. [The Nectar of Devotion, Lecture, Vṛndāvana 27 October 1972]

So anywhere, either you take this state or that state—doesn't matter—unless there is a smooth, systematic establishment of these four orders of life, the state or the society will not go very smoothly. [Conversation with Prof. Kotovsky, Moscow 22 June 1971]

Vedic religion... Vedic religion means varṇāśrama-dharma. That is... Kṛṣṇa says, God says, cātur-varṇyaṁ mayā sṛṣṭaṁ [Bg. 4.13]. So that is, what is called, obligatory. Just like law is obligatory. You cannot say that “I don't take this law.” No. You have to take it if you want to have a happy [society]. [Answers to a Questionnaire from Bhavan's Journal, New Vṛndāvana 28 June 1976]

These varṇas and āśramas have their respective duties, and unless human society is divided according to these eight scientific divisions and everyone acts according to his position, there can be no peace in the world. [Teachings of Lord Kapiladeva, Vs 3, Text 3]

Unless in the human society the Varṇāśrama system is introduced, no scheme or social order, health order or any order, political order, will be successful. [Room Conversation Vṛndāvana, 18 October 1977]

If we do not take to the principles of varṇāśrama-dharma by accepting the four social orders (brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra) and the four orders of spiritual life (brahmacārī, gṛhastha, vānaprastha and sannyāsa), there can be no question of success in life. [SB 5.19.10 Purport]

We have repeatedly stressed that human culture does not begin unless one takes to the principles of varṇāśrama-dharma. [SB 7.15.38-39 Purport]

Furthermore, the author(s) claim that *varṇāśrama* “conventions (not principles)” are not universal and not meant for attaining the supreme. From the above excerpts of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lectures and purports, we have established that *varṇāśrama* conventions are structured with the aim that one can realize the Absolute Truth, and hence how can the author(s) state that these conventions have no connection with Supreme Absolute Truth? Another point of contention is that their statement that *varṇāśrama* conventions are not universal is directly refuted by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his book “Message to Godhead,” as absurd:

The various modes of nature are persistent in every corner of the universe, and since brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, and so forth are simply products of the modes of nature, how can one say that the four castes do not exist in a particular part of the world? This is absurd. In every country and at all times there have been, there are, and there will be the four social orders, according to the modes of nature. Those who persist in the theory that the four social orders called the caste system exist only in India are totally mistaken. In all other countries, also, there are the same orders of life, under some name or other. And thus everywhere in the world, even those who are far below the qualifications of an ordinary śūdra, the fourth social order, are eligible for the transcendental service of the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

– Message of Godhead - MoG 2: Karma-yoga

Quoting Śrīla Prabhupāda out of context – exposed

This has been a very common feature of their book – that the author(s) pull a quote from a letter of Śrīla Prabhupāda sent to one of his disciples and present it completely out of its context and use it as their *mūla-mantra*, or the root statement on which they base their narrative. Let us consider the following passage from page 59 of the book in contention, wherein the author(s) quote a portion of a correspondence of Śrīla Prabhupāda sent to one of his disciples:

...the Varṇāśrama system is for convenience sake in the material world. It has nothing to do with spiritual life. Acceptance of varṇāśrama means a little easy progress to spiritual life, otherwise it has no importance to us. For example, all my European and American disciples have no varṇāśrama position but spiritually because they have followed the rules and regulations and also my instructions, their advancement spiritually is being appreciated by everyone. Always remember that varṇāśrama life is a good program for material life, and it helps one in spiritual life; but spiritual life is not dependent upon it.
– Letter to Hamsaduta, 19 October 1974 – [p 59]

Before we attempt to discuss the above-quoted correspondence, let us consider what Śrīla Prabhupāda has to say on this topic from his main sources (books and lectures) as shown below:

The *varṇāśrama system* is entirely meant for *viṣṇu-ārādhana*, worship of Lord Viṣṇu. *Varṇāśramācāravatā puruṣeṇa paraḥ pumān/ viṣṇur ārādhyate* [Cc. *Madhya* 8.58] (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 3.8.9). The ultimate goal of life is to please Lord Viṣṇu, the Supreme Lord. [SB 10.5.15-16 Purport]

One must first of all accept the principles of *varṇas* and *āśramas*. Then there is question of understanding God. [Room Conversation, London 2 September 1973]

To understand this truth, the *Varṇāśrama system* required. Without this the *Varṇāśrama system* nobody can understand that we are individual person, we existed in the past, and we shall exist

in the future, and we are existing at present. [SB 5.6.10 Lecture, Bombay 28 December 1976]

Returning to the quoted correspondence from page 59 of the book in question, the author(s) present only a partial quote from Śrīla Prabhupāda's letter to his disciple Hamsaduta, concerning a specific topic with certain purpose. The original circumstances which prompted Śrīla Prabhupāda to send this letter that he did not want Hamsaduta to invest a lot of money in buying a farm, when at that time the priorities were different. In a book titled, "Śrīla Prabhupāda and His Disciples in Germany by Vedavyāsa dāsa," the writer describes the complete context of Śrīla Prabhupāda's correspondence to Hamsaduta in the chapter, "15. Mit fünf Mark sind Sie dabei!" In that chapter the writer claims that Hamsaduta wanted to buy farmland in Germany with the money raised through the sale of LP records and books, but at that juncture Śrīla Prabhupāda did not want the money to be spent on farmland, and instead he wanted that money to be spent on *prasādam* distribution at ISKCON Māyāpur. A vedabase software search yields a couple more results related to the subject, among which, is a book written by another ISKCON devotee. That writer used the same Hamsaduta correspondence from October 1974 as supporting evidence for his context, which is far different from that of Śrīla Prabhupāda's originally intended message.

Apart from the scriptural injunctions, common sense says that a prescription for the cure is always unique and varies from patient to patient, and hence it is not only illusory but extremely dangerous to consider a specific prescription as a panacea. Yet again, by presenting out of context statements from a personal correspondence (from page 59 of the book in question), the author(s) prove themselves to be notorious practitioners prescribing medicines in a reckless fashion.

Every mother is not a dīkṣā-guru

In this section, we will refute the author(s)' views on pages 68 and 69 of their book, that every mother shall be a *dīkṣā-guru* which is based on emotions and sentiments instead of the principles of guru, *sādhū*, and *śāstra*. Under the titles, “Every Mother Should Deliver Her Dependents from Birth and Death” and “Mothers and Gurus Share the Same Broad Rasa,” the author(s) state that women who are mothers are equally responsible for delivering their dependents as a spiritual master is for delivering his disciples. In this way, they make a bogus statement similar to the “son and disciple” argument⁶⁹ that mothers and gurus share the same “*rasa*.” In previous sections the author(s) argued that a disciple would offer a woman *dīkṣā-guru*, the same protection as a son would offer his mother. On page 68 of their book the author(s) far exceed anyone in interpolation and speculative imagination:

Part of His mission was to re-establish varṇāśrama by example, and He specifically instructed humanity that the duty of the mother is non-different than the role of the guru: To deliver one's dependants from birth and death. Lord Rṣabhadeva said: ... Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in the purport: “Everyone should be very responsible and take charge of his dependents just as a spiritual master takes charge of his disciple.” **There is therefore no incongruity for a woman to first play the role of a responsible mother and then accept spiritual children; both roles involve the duty of delivering her dependents.** The two functions are equivalent: A woman should not become a mother if she can't offer – by precept and example – the instruments of liberation; which, in substance, is the function of the *dīkṣā-guru*. We must conclude that the alleged incompatibility of the roles is imaginary only. [page 68]

From the above excerpt from page 68 of their book, the author(s) pose as though they are presenting evidence based on *śāstra-vākya* and *guru-vākya*, yet we have already proven in our “grain of rice test” section that their conclusion that the role of a

69 See section “Son and Disciple are the same” – refuted on page 72

mother is to deliver children is in direct contradiction to that of Śrīla Prabhupāda's conclusions in the SB 5.5.18 purport. In the "grain of rice test" section, it has already been explained in detail that the actual purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.5.18 only states that the role of a father (not mother) is to deliver his dependents. Many personalities are responsible for the deliverance of a particular person for particular purposes:

1. Father for giving both material and spiritual well-being to the child.
2. Mother for giving the child a body and caring for it, without which the child can't take to the spiritual path.⁷⁰
3. Relatives for providing social security based on the dharmic path
4. Demigods for creating the natural balance needed for the spiritual emancipation of the whole society
5. Husband for wife's spiritual and material well being
6. Guru for disciples' spiritual well being

They all share the same responsibility but their roles are different. All parts of a machine share the same responsibility to get the job done but their functions (roles) are different, and if one part tries to act in the role of another part the whole thing is spoiled.

There are several purports in which Śrīla Prabhupāda categorically states that the role of parents (father and mother) is to serve their children to ensure that they attain spiritual advancement.

The selection of a good husband for a good girl was always entrusted to the parents. Here it is stated that Manu and his wife were coming to see Kardama Muni to offer their daughter because the daughter was well qualified and the parents were searching out a similarly qualified man. **This is the duty of parents.** Girls are never thrown into the public street to search out their

husband, for when girls are grown up and are searching after a boy, they forget to consider whether the boy they select is actually suitable for them. [SB 3.21.27 purport]

From the above purport, it is clear that the duty of the parents is different from the duty of a *dīkṣā-guru*. The parents are responsible for the spiritual advancement and the material well-being, such as arranging a suitable marriage partner etc., of their children. Whereas, in a guru and disciple relationship, the disciple has to serve the guru and the guru is responsible only for the spiritual development of the disciple. There are instances of the father himself becoming the initiating spiritual master for his sons but there is no history of a mother becoming the *dīkṣā-guru* of her children. The disciple completely gives up his material life at the time of his initiation, as stated in Cc *Antya* 4.194:

“The living entity who is subjected to birth and death attains immortality when he gives up all material activities, dedicates his life to the execution of My order, and acts according to My directions. In this way, he becomes fit to enjoy the spiritual bliss derived from exchanging loving mellows with Me.”

Purport: This is a quotation from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.29.34). At the time of initiation, a devotee gives up all his material conceptions. Therefore, being in touch with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he is situated on the transcendental platform. Thus having attained knowledge and the spiritual platform, he always engages in the service of the spiritual body of Kṛṣṇa. When one is freed from material connections in this way, his body immediately becomes spiritual, and Kṛṣṇa accepts his service. However, Kṛṣṇa does not accept anything from a person with a material conception of life. [Cc *Antya* 4.194 purport]

Hence the author(s) make a loose argument as part of their conclusion, as stated below:

1. The role of a mother is to deliver her dependents
2. The role of a guru is to deliver his disciples
3. So, a mother can become a *dīkṣā-guru* and accept spiritual children or disciples.

First and foremost, only after getting married by proper Vedic rituals, does a woman start to play the role of a mother in having children and caring for them. Secondly, a mother's role is not to deliver her dependants from the cycle of *samsāra* but to assist her husband whose duty is to deliver his children and dependants. Besides that, the author(s) perhaps forgot that they previously argued that, "being in a family relationship, his mother," was the reason why Sunīti could not become the *dikṣā-guru* of Dhruva Mahārāja; but in this section, they argue that because a mother delivers her dependents, she should become *dikṣā-guru*. The author(s) are blatantly contradicting a previous argument that they made; this is poor scholarship on their part. This latter argument of the author(s)' has already been shown, by quoting *śāstra*, to be invalid – a woman cannot become a *dikṣā-guru*.

Hence, in concluding this section, we have demonstrated that there is nothing in *śāstra* that permits women to become *dikṣā-gurus* and with ISKCON officially institutionalizing female *dikṣā-gurus* it is the final nail in the coffin in terms of obstructing *varṇāśrama* implementation within ISKCON.

Equal rights Agenda -refuted

This book that we are refuting is like the Bible for the feminist narrative in ISKCON and describing it as a *brahmāstra* against *varṇāśrama* wouldn't be an overstatement. The author(s)'s agenda, to slaughter Vedic culture and systematically influence the minds of ISKCON devotees with secular narratives, is obvious in the last fifty pages of their book. This is akin to how centuries ago, the British entered India to destroy Vedic culture and to rule her over. The author(s) utilize the very same technique, not wasting a single opportunity to completely eradicate whatever remains of the *varṇāśrama* system and Vedic culture within ISKCON. The last section of their book is the evidence that exhibits the author(s)' hatred for Vedic culture and the *varṇāśrama* system.

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